

The Shipping Gazette and Sydney General Trade List Mon 26 Jun 1854

To the Editor of the Sydney Morning Herald. Maryborough; 3rd June 1854,

Sir,— This small township has been the scene of some excitement by the arrival of a portion of the crews of two vessels which were wrecked about 300 miles to the north-east. The one a Dutch vessel, the Hester, 800 tons, Captain Victor, went to pieces upon Kenn's Reef on the 21st of April last; fortunately, the crew had just time to lower their two boats and provision them before she went down. In them the captain, doctor, three mates, and (13) thirteen men reached the infant settlement of Port Curtis (10) ten days subsequent to the wreck. Here they received every attention from Captain O'Connell, the Government Resident, and other inhabitants, and came on here by the Jenny Lind which was there at the time. She is commanded by Captain Cooper, a well-known seaman of this place, who appears to have been extremely kind to these unfortunate passengers. At the time of the wreck there was in her company another Dutch vessel, the Doelwyck, which was spoken with nearly at the time of the melancholy occurrence. Of the fate of the crew of the latter vessel we are in entire ignorance, as when the boats from the Hester got cleared from the reef one of them was despatched to report the state of their vessel; on its arrival, it seemed, the whole of the crew had left, as the bulwarks had been cut away, evidently with the view of launching her boats. It is resumed, therefore, they have gone northward with the intention of making Raines' Island; where we trust, by the providence of God, they may have arrived safely.

On this day the survivors of the crew of a third vessel, the Mahaica, Captain Stanton, bound for Calcutta, arrived, having been guided a portion of their way hither by two natives who met them in the bush. It appears they struck upon 'Wreck Reef,' and immediately went to pieces; the whole of the crew, consisting of captain, mate, eight seamen, and a boy, entered the boat, but had no time to put in any water for their use. After eight days they made land opposite Woody Island, which forms the northern portion of Wide Bay. Here, from the violence of the surf, the boat was beached; the party upon landing were in a most exhausted state. Up to this time they had subsisted upon one bottle of beer and four bottles of wine, with a little cheese: before leaving the boat, the boy died from exhaustion. From the intricacy of the country, (intersected as it is here by streams) and their very weak state, they were twenty-four days reaching this settlement, their number upon arrival having been reduced to five, by the successive deaths of their companions. Their appearance upon arrival was most deplorable, and from the state of their feet they must have suffered very much in travelling. It is really difficult to say what they subsisted upon during this interval; they represent having caught some small fish, which appear to have been somewhat poisonous, as one of the seamen died immediately after partaking of a small portion, experiencing all the symptoms usually consequent thereon. Indeed, they all sickened from the same cause, and, independent of their weakness, were so seriously ill that they laid down beside their dead comrade without a hope or even a wish to proceed any further. Providentially, at this period the natives found them.

The presence of so many sufferers has excited the deepest sympathy of the inhabitants of this thinly populated spot, and, with one or two exceptions, they have freely tendered both their hospitality and money. A subscription was proposed, and readily entered into, amounting to about £56; which, from the circumstance of their being none of the neighbouring settlers in at the time, may speak for the kind feelings of the householders.

The genuine kindness of Mrs. Aldridge, of the Bush Inn, to the sufferers upon their arrival, deserves particular notice, and from her personal observations the most considerate attention was manifested. Nor must I omit the name of Mr. Howard — the other innkeeper of Maryborough — who offered his house to any of them during their stay here. These also I understand are to proceed to

Sydney by the Jenny Lind, and I have no doubt will leave this spot with a feeling of thankfulness, more from the reflection of their escape from the melancholy death of their six companions, than from the little kindness we have been enabled to show them.

I would also notice the attention of the two natives, their guides, travelling with them the last two days, and need not add they were duly rewarded.

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